



MEDIA RELEASE | EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 GMT, THURSDAY 30 NOVEMBER

## JON GRAY, JACK SMYTH AND NEIL PACKER HEADLINE THE INAUGURAL BOLOGNABOOKPLUS ILLUSTRATION & DESIGN FORUM AS THE BOLOGNA GRAND TOUR MAKES A LONDON STOP

BolognaBookPlus is hosting its first **Illustration & Design Forum**, January 23rd 2024, at the Groucho Club, London, as part of the overall Bologna Grand Tour, which sees the Bologna brand (BCBF, BBPLUS and BLTF) travel from Frankfurt to New York, Guadalajara to London, with the grand finale in New Delhi.

The Illustration & Design Forum, showcasing the expertise, talent and experience of the rockstars of illustration – and those who commission them- is aimed at the book illustrators and designers of tomorrow. Comprising three major panels and concluding with portfolio reviews, it will offer inspiration as well as a behind-the-scenes view, for those interested in design and illustration in general trade publishing, in particular those starting out, or studying in the arena.

Curated in partnership with Mimaster Illustrazione (Milan), Jon Gray and Jack Smyth, the award-winners behind **Dante, Shakespeare, 400th anniversary The Complete Plays, William Gibson's Neuromancer, Zadie Smith's Grand Union, Kurt Vonnegut's BlueBeard George Orwell's 1984 and Ngozi Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun** in addition to countless more, give a rare glimpse into the creative process behind design classics and the business of bringing to life the words between the covers.

Design and illustration are undisputedly in the Italian DNA, and nowhere more so than in the Bologna brand. BolognaBookPlus has taken inspiration from BCBF and shines a light on all aspects of design and illustration in general trade publishing.

Next April **Jackets Off** returns to the fair, considering one iconic title in all its iterations and languages, comprising an exhibit and seminar – the 2024 title will be announced at the Forum. **Book Jackets: Best of the Best** is a contest and exhibition at the fair showcasing a spotlight region's talent.

2024's **Talking Pictures** featured country, Ukraine, has a renowned graphic illustrative tradition with a deep connection to print's origins, and which has distinguished itself by the graphic care inherent in its research, as well as in all of its editorial products. The areas to be recognized are illustrated books, graphic novels, books on graphic design, photography, fine art and architecture and design with consideration given to other suggested genres by Ukraine. This unique exhibit will span the period pre-2022(war) to the present day and is run in collaboration with the respected New York academic and designer, Steven Guarnaccia.



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**Jacks Thomas, Guest Director, BolognaBookPlus says:** *‘Doors are opened to the stories within by great illustration and design; non-fiction is complemented by fabulous visuals...the part played by those behind the design, production and art in publishing is immense. It is a pleasure to build on the Bologna brand here in London and to give a platform to incredible UK talent while introducing the design professionals of tomorrow.’*

**Giacomo Benelli, International Programming, Mimaster Illustrazione says:** *‘This Forum will celebrate the present and the future...to date, images produced with AI are recognisable because they have a taste of déjà vu, of copying...The visual dictionary of AI is potentially limitless but we will examine the crucial – and creative - part played by humans in this new world. We are excited to explore the creative potential of human error, physical randomness, and algorithmic precision during this first forum in London.’*

**Illustration and Design Programme:**

**Getting Your Hands Dirty with Jon and Jack**

*Analogue approach to cover design as a creative resource in the experience of Jon Gray and Jack Smith. Through a series of case studies, a dual perspective on the value of physicality in the age of high digital impact.*

**In-Conversation with Illustrator Neil Packer**

*The relationship between human and artificial creativity panel discussion  
Individual portfolio reviews*

**Notes to editors:**

**About BolognaBookPlus (BBPlus)**

BolognaBookPlus was launched in 2020 by BCBF/BolognaFiere, in collaboration with the Italian Publishers Association (AIE), to reach a general trade publishing audience via a three-day exhibit, training and conferences - among other opportunities- taking place alongside the acclaimed Bologna Children’s Book Fair 8-11 April 2024. Working closely with the Bologna team, BolognaBookPlus is led by Jacks Thomas as Guest Director, supported by a UK team.

**About Mimaster**

Mimaster Illustrazione is an international training institution for illustrators based in Milan, Italy. Its educational path cultivates creativity through workshops and masterclasses with leading international authors and publishers and provides illustrators with the operational tools of the profession.

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